

# TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group

[www.haringey.org.uk](http://www.haringey.org.uk)

**"If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal" - Emma Goldman**

## DON'T VOTE, TAKE TO THE STREETS

May sees another round of local elections - an opportunity to vote for people who will supposedly carry out our wishes. But the reality is very different. The only way politicians respond to our demands is when we are on the streets, screaming loudly, forcing them to hear us.

Voting is not an act of political freedom. It is an act of political conformity. Those who refuse to vote are not expressing silence. They are screaming in the politician's ear: 'you do not represent me. I do not believe you'. Many people are deeply alienated by the political establishment. In the 32 London boroughs less than 40% of us took part in the last local elections. But it is not just a question of getting the 'right' politicians, politicians that listen, are well-meaning or have better policies. Even if everyone voted, 'our' politicians would not do what we need them to do. No matter which lot get elected, no matter what they say before the elections, they always end up betraying the working class. They sell off our treasures (municipal buildings, council estates, playing



fields, parks, swimming pools, youth centres, etc) to parasite developers and landlords, they privatise and cut our services and raise council-tax to unaffordable levels. They even undertake a targeted policy of 'managed decline' and social cleansing in our communities.

That mark on the ballot paper means 'yes'; it is us agreeing to the electoral process by way of

participating. No wonder all those who stand for election agree you should vote - it gives them credibility. Sadiq Khan won the election for London Mayor on the basis that Londoners had had enough of gentrification, social cleansing and the sell-off of public housing. But his new London plan is just more of the same- 'partnerships' with private developers- continuing to hand London on a plate to those whose main aim is profit.

The expression "don't vote, it only encourages them", gives an idea of why anarchists are against participating in elections. Voting just gives politicians our backing as they bring in policies most Londoners are against. They cannot help but do this as they are operating within a capitalist system; power lies outside Parliament in the hands of banks and big business. Don't give them an excuse to say that 'we voted for this'. It's on the streets and in grass roots campaigns that the true voice of Londoners will be heard. Not via the ballot box.



# VOTE FOR NOBODY

## LOCAL COUNCILLOR THINKS ELECTIONS ARE A SCAM

A local councillor (Councillor X) told Totally Independent recently that elections are a complete con and voting is a trick to make people think they have a say in decision making.

### Democracy?

We vote every four years in local elections. So called "democratically elected" local politicians then deciding on everything from selling off council housing and public land to privatising schools and services. Complain and what do we hear - "well, that's democracy - you voted for us."

### Out of a Job

We put it to Councillor X that people would be better off organising themselves. Worriedly, he said "I hope not. If people do that and make decisions collectively about their own lives, I can't tell them what to do. Then we can't tax, exploit or manipulate them. If everyone has an equal say, my boss and landlord mates can't make a whacking profit out of you. And I'll be out of a job. Sod that." Then he said, "If we left it to you lot to run things, the country would be in a right mess". We laughed - what about the banks failing, businesses going to the wall, thousands of people being laid off

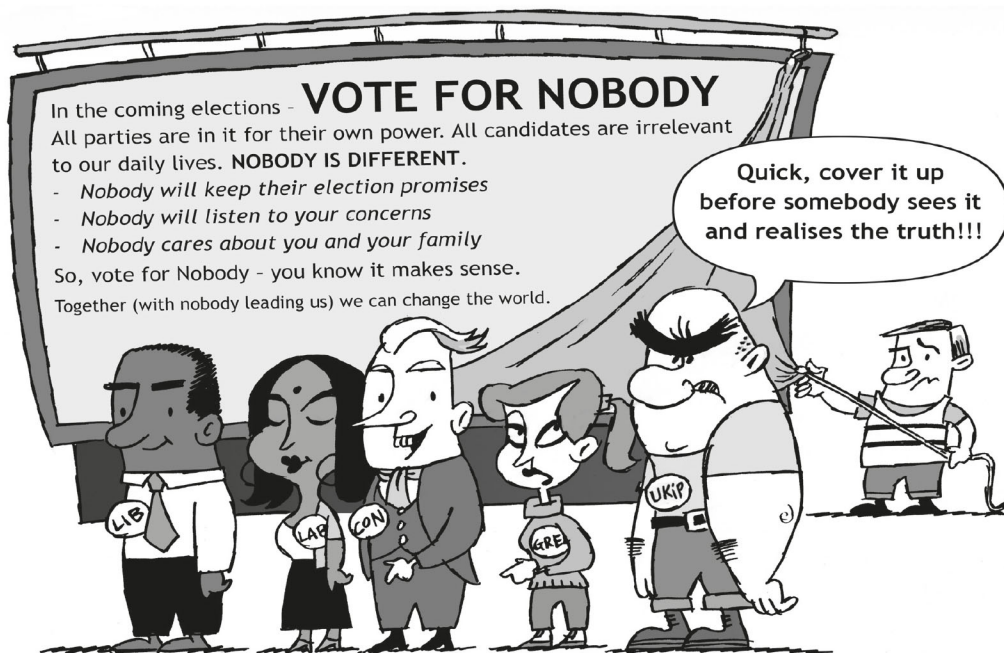
work, people having homes repossessed, local services run into the ground.....? For the first time in our lives, we saw a politician speechless and blushing!

### Elections are a Con

We asked Councillor X what gave him the right to decide things for the people of Haringey. "Er...I was voted in." But in 2014 less than a third of people on the electoral register in Tottenham voted. Labour won with 48% of the vote. With lots of people not on the register probably less than 10% of us voted for you. We asked if this notion of democracy was a con. "Yes," he whined, "I suppose it is". As he walked away we asked him which party he was from. "Why does that matter" he responded. "They're all the same. All I wanted was the power."

### Vote for Nobody

Whoever wins this election, the effects are the same. All political parties say one thing then do the opposite. Different names but same old rubbish. So we have our own candidate - Nobody. In the coming elections vote for Nobody as Nobody will carry out the wishes of local people. Nobody will abolish poverty and hardship and make sure we all have what we need. Nobody believes in you. If nobody is in power it will be better for all of us? By organising together, with Nobody leading us, we can change our world for all of us.



# NEVER MIND THE BALLOTS

Yet again another election is upon us. We know that voting for most candidates is pointless as it changes little or nothing for the majority of people's lives. Just look at the history: corruption, backhanders, sucking up to corporate business for the gain of a few while constituents are treated with contempt. Even those who go in for genuine reasons

soon find they can't do anything as the whole system is corrupt. So do we turn up and spoil our vote or just not bother at all, here are two views

### SPOILER YES

Spoiling your ballot paper may be just one small act of dissent. Spoilt ballots are counted, and the number is usually reported in election results, though

it's often lumped with unintentionally spoilt papers. A deliberately spoilt ballot shows that we are not apathetic about government but pissed off with party politics and politicians.

If a larger number of people did this instead of voted for any party, wouldn't it give politicians a shock? It would certainly get some media coverage.



# THE ALTERNATIVES

We say “vote for nobody” because we don’t think 59 councillors in Haringey should speak for 250,000 local people. Nor do we think 650 MPs should speak for 60 million people in the UK.

But “vote for nobody” doesn’t mean “do nothing”. It doesn’t mean just moaning. Or thinking only of yourself.

To change the present system that puts profit before people and the rich before the poor we have to work out new ways of running our lives, environment and economy. Turn the TV off and start to make a difference. But how?

Here are some examples. There is Haringey Federation of Residents’ Associations. If every street/estate had its own residents’ group, with everyone playing a part, we would make the

decisions that affect how and where we live. In fact, there are already dozens of such groups in Haringey doing just this. Haringey Friends of Parks Forum is doing the same thing for our local parks. Both need more of us involved.

Housing co-ops are where people collectively own their own homes or in some cases whole estates. Those who live in the homes decide how they are run. Workers co-ops are where workers get together to run a business without a boss –and everybody gets the same money no matter if they do the accounts or the cleaning.

Then there are groups fighting for different rights for local people. Out Tottenham want the people of Tottenham to decide how our area

should look and be developed. Wards Corner Community Coalition is doing the same around Seven Sisters. Similar campaigns exist all over Haringey.

Militant trades unions, run by workers, get better wages and conditions for themselves and offer a lead to others to do likewise. People with kids are setting up play groups. In Haringey Housing Action Group people support each other to get decent housing by using direct action. Tottenham Rights are fighting racism and support those attacked by the state like Mark Duggan. These, and many more, are examples of people organising, fighting back and changing things for the better - for all of us.



So, it’s not what box you put a cross in on May 3rd that counts. It’s about what we (and not politicians) do for the rest of the year that matters. But, if we don’t start organising ourselves, then politicians will continue to treat us like children who should be seen but not heard.

It did get noticed when there were 120,000 spoilt papers in the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) elections in 2010.

Add your own box to the list of candidates and label it “None of the above” or “Honest politician”. A spoilt ballot is an alternative to the protest vote of choosing a candidate you’re sure won’t get in, which reduces the percentage vote for the winner.

It’s only one small act of dissent, but why stop there?

## SPOILER NO

I have no faith in the political system - this so called representative democracy. So I will not be voting in these elections. People tell me if I don’t vote I have no right to criticise decisions politicians make. I am told that not voting is apathetic. But regardless of whether I vote or not, the real apathy comes from doing nothing in between elections. If you really want to make a difference then get out there and be involved.

Why not spoil your vote to show you’re unhappy with the way things are? Why,

because it is a total waste of time, it achieves nothing. Spoiled votes are counted and added to the official figures but how and why they were spoiled is not registered. I hate a political system that is self-serving, unjust and corrupt. The very act of turning up just to spoil my ballot shows support for a system I cannot stand. Not voting doesn’t mean I am apathetic as many claim. I have joined with others locally to fight the injustices in our community, so that together we can make a difference.



# GET INVOLVED !

We can't list all the active groups in Haringey - here are some we think are doing good stuff or need support.

**Anti-Raids Network** gathers and spreads information to oppose immigration raids.  
[www.raids.net](http://www.raids.net)

**Haringey Defend Council Housing** is a part of a national campaign for investment and improvement in council housing, and against rent and service charge rises.  
[www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)

**Haringey Federation of Residents Associations** connects about 180 residents' associations in Haringey who are improving their local areas.  
[www.haringeyresidents.org](http://www.haringeyresidents.org)

**Haringey Friends of Parks Forum** is a network of 40 local Friends groups who are protecting and improving our parks and open spaces.  
[www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk](http://www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk)

**Haringey Housing Action Group** is a self-help group who meet fortnightly and support each other with housing problems and take action for better housing in Haringey.  
<http://haringeyhousingaction.org.uk/>

**Haringey Justice for Palestinians** is a broad based movement campaigning to end the illegal occupation of Palestinian land.  
[www.hjfp.org.uk](http://www.hjfp.org.uk)

**Haringey Migrants Support Centre** provides a drop-in service for migrants, providing advice and reducing social isolation.  
[www.haringeymsc.org](http://www.haringeymsc.org)

**Haringey Welcome** campaign to make Haringey an inclusive and safe home for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.  
[www.haringeywelcome.org](http://www.haringeywelcome.org)

**North London Community House** is a Turkish/Kurdish run community centre near Bruce Grove which supports community projects and local campaign groups. 22 Moorefield Rd, N17 6PY tel: 020 8885 0899

**Our Tottenham** is a network of local community groups standing up for the interests of people in Tottenham, especially concerned with 'regeneration' issues.  
<http://ourtottenham.org.uk>

**Radical History Network** is a Haringey based group which holds open meetings on issues still relevant today, celebrating the history of struggles and learning from the past.  
<http://radicalhistorynetwork.blogspot.co.uk>

**SLR Radio** is a live internet and FM radio station; on Tuesdays 10.30pm till late - discussions around politics, local community and health issues presented by Find Your Voice.  
<https://myspace.com/slrradio>

**St. Anns' Re-development Trust (StART)** is a group of Haringey residents and workers who want to see the St. Ann's Hospital site used permanently for the good of all our local communities  
[www.startharingey.co.uk](http://www.startharingey.co.uk)

**StopHDV** is a campaign against Haringey Council's proposal to demolish and privatise Council estates in the borough.  
[www.StopHDV.com](http://www.StopHDV.com)

**Sustainable Haringey** network links up green groups and projects throughout the borough. <http://sustainable-haringey.wikispaces.com>

**Tottenham Rights** aims to challenge racism, fight oppression and build community through holding public events and campaigning for greater public inclusion and accountability.  
<http://tottenhamrights.org.uk>

**Wards Corner Community Coalition** has so far prevented demolition of the multi-cultural market area in Seven Sisters and has a viable alternative plan.  
[www.wardscornercommunity.org.uk](http://www.wardscornercommunity.org.uk)

## WHO WE ARE

In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign. We wanted to create a long-term, vibrant, non-hierarchical group, unlike political parties where ambitions and posturing displace real politics.

We believe in ridding ourselves of the current system which places profit and power before people's needs. This involves getting organised, fighting back and collectively taking those decisions which affect our daily lives.

We think people should take control of their community and workplace struggles, support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for these struggles and generate strong, permanent, grassroots networks.

Many of us are involved with local residents', community and campaigning groups within the borough. We support workers in dispute, campaigns against public service cuts and threatened community amenities. We are active on environmental, housing and claimants'

issues and resist state controls.

Come and share your views at our monthly meeting. We welcome your involvement and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.

For more about HSG, visit [www.haringey.org.uk](http://www.haringey.org.uk), befriend us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter @\_hsg\_, contact us at PO Box 2474, London N8, phone 0845 2235270 or email [info@haringey.org.uk](mailto:info@haringey.org.uk)